

41. (Amended) The method as claimed in claim 38, wherein the control cell is MCF-7 breast cancer cell, further comprising a second detectably labeled surface determinant which is an estrogen determinant.

42. (Amended) The method as claimed in claim 38, wherein the control cell is an LNCaP prostate cancer cell, further comprising a second detectably labeled surface determinant selected from the group consisting of PSMA, PSA, and androgen determinant.

47. (Amended) An improved kit for screening a patient sample for the presence of circulating tumor cells, comprising:

- a) coated magnetic nanoparticles comprising a magnetic core material, a protein based coating material, and anti-EpCAM coupled, directly or indirectly, to said base coating material;
- b) at least one antibody having binding specificity for a cancer cell determinant;
- c) cell specific dye for excluding sample components other than said tumor cells from analysis wherein the improvement comprises the addition of a container comprising stabilized cells, [previously] permeabilized, for use as an internal control, said stabilized control cells having determinants in common with said tumor cells, wherein said membrane of said control cell is detectably labeled, and cellular components and antigenic moieties of said control cells have been stabilized for [at least six months] a long-term storage period by exposure to fixative, said stabilized control cells being suspended in a buoyant density medium.

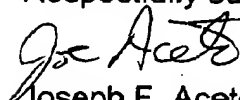
50. (Amended) The kit as claimed in claim 47, wherein the control cell is an LNCaP prostate cancer cell, further comprising a second detectably labeled surface determinant selected from the group consisting of PSMA, PSA, and androgen determinant.

54. (Amended) The kit as claimed in claim 47, wherein the control cell is a C32 melanoma cancer cell, further comprising a second detectably labeled surface determinant which is a CD146 molecule.

Please let me know if these amendments are satisfactory or if there are further issues that need clarification to efficiently respond in our next official response (the statutory period of reply expires on August 27, 2003).

Thank you for your help

Respectfully submitted,



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